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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 001154

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FOR EUR/RPM CARLETON BULKIN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [FR](#) [IT](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH FRUSTRATION WITH SLOW PACE OF EUROPEAN
GENDARMERIE FORCE DEPLOYMENT

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen Allegrone for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. In recent meetings, French officials have expressed significant frustration with the delays in launching the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF) police training mission to Afghanistan, attributing much of the problem to Italian intransigence. While the August meetings at NATO to stand up the structure of the NTM-A, which the EGF will fall under, and to confirm flags to posts may help the project to move forward, French officials maintain that the main obstruction remains the differing visions of the EGF put forth by France and Italy as the two leading contributors. Essentially, the French wanted the EGF in order to give a "European" framework to the project which will in turn facilitate the contributions of other countries. They claim that the Italians want the project to retain a high national visibility and this difference has caused the two to become bogged down in issues over posts, structure and other contributors. Given that the project was unveiled as a significant new contribution at the Strasbourg NATO summit, it is politically imperative now for French officials to demonstrate to their leaders and NATO allies that concrete progress is being made. France has bilaterally already started sending some of its planned gendarmes to Afghanistan, where a small group (15 to 30) is now conducting short-term police training until the EGF can be fully implemented. But frustration is running high enough that MFA Director of Strategic Affairs, Jacques Audibert (soon to be promoted to Political Director or P-equivalent) is now threatening to send the rest of the French contingent without waiting for Italy, saying that the EGF will simply wait to come into being "when Italy finally sends its own gendarmes to join us." End Summary.

¶2. (C) In an August 21 meeting, Francois Delmas, NATO specialist in the French Af-Pak cell, he outlined French efforts thus far to contribute to police training in Afghanistan. France has maintained "small projects" of specialized police training in Afghanistan by French National Police (for example, in the areas of fighting drugs or conducting criminal investigations) and currently contributes 14 police and gendarmes to the European Union police training mission (EUPOL). The EGF project was meant to be a significant and immediate project to augment existing efforts to address a critical need for police training in Afghanistan. According to Delmas, from the beginning France proposed a "European" structure rather than a bilateral national initiative to facilitate the participation of other European partners (and likely to make it more palatable domestically). While only France and Italy have made specific commitments to date, Delmas stated that Spain and the Netherlands are considering contributing 40-50 police each, Poland is discussing deploying 10 Polish police and Lithuania, Portugal and Romania are also hoping to make a

"symbolic contribution." According to Delmas, there is "room enough for everyone" to contribute.

¶3. (C) The problem, Delmas stated, has come down to Italy not sharing the same vision for EGF as France, preferring instead a project that will give high-visibility to Italian national efforts. This has played out in the game for coveted posts within NTM-A and across the board whenever it comes to making concrete proposals and including other countries. The result, Delmas says is "counterproductive" and the GOF really wishes that the Italians had made their alternate vision clear from the beginning, as much valuable time is being wasted.

¶4. (C) To alleviate their frustration and respond to pressure from political leaders to launch the project, Delmas said that the first elements of the French team (15 to 30 gendarmes) have already been deployed to Afghanistan where they are engaging in short-term police training projects to "keep busy" while waiting for the EGF to become operational. In fact, Francois Richier, Strategic Affairs Advisor at the Elysee, noted proudly on August 19 that France had been helpful by training upward of 400 Afghan police prior to the elections. This is a short-term solution as Paris currently envisions that, of its 150 gendarmes who will ultimately be deployed, some 30-40 will ultimately participate in training of Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) and the rest will be deployed in RC-East in Kapisa and Surobi districts where French armed forces are concentrated. There they will provide Police Mentoring Teams (PMTs) where the French gendarmes will accompany Afghan police on the ground and provide advice and mentoring. While final decisions are

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being made, the French gendarmes who will participate in the PMTs have begun their own training, which should be concluded by November for all of the participants.

¶5. (C) Ultimately, Delmas stressed that the French objective remains to deploy their gendarmes in the proposed EGF framework, while adding that at this stage, they are willing to ramp up their national efforts in cooperation with the Combined Security Transition Command - Afghanistan (CSTC-A) which is responsible for training Afghan security forces. This is a bilateral initiative which would then be subsumed into the EGF once it is up and running. This sentiment was corroborated by Jacques Audibert, MFA Director of Strategic Affairs (and soon to be P-equivalent), who informed us in an August 19 meeting that he had spoken the previous day to his Italian counterpart, and was exasperated by what he described as ongoing Italian reasons for delays. Audibert claimed that France has therefore decided it will "soon" deploy the rest of the 150 gendarmes that it has pledged as part of the EGF without waiting for Italy, with Audibert stating that the EGF will simply wait to come into being "when Italy finally sends its own gendarmes to join us."

¶6. (C) Comment: The French have told us of continuous friction between the two main contributors to the EGF -- France and Italy -- regarding deployment of the European Gendarmerie Force since the proposal was announced. Although initial reports seemed to point to disagreements over staffing and structural issues, it now appears that the differences are more fundamental. As the lead nation on developing the proposal, which the French had originally planned for an initial May or June deployment, Audibert's confirmation of what we are hearing at a working level indicates that the GOF may indeed be willing to sacrifice the symbolic value of a "European" initiative (albeit under the NATO NTM-A umbrella) in favor of simply getting their project on the ground. That said, French officials made clear that they are still working hard to launch EGF itself, but they are no longer willing to constrain their own bilateral plans simply to wait for the final negotiations to be complete. Given that the strong-willed President Sarkozy was a strong proponent of the EGF proposal, politically they may not have

any choice other than to take action soon. End Comment.

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